DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 235 884 PS 013 872

AUTHOR Manburg, Abbey
TITLE Program Delivery in Distance Education--One Successful Strategy.
PUB DATE Jun 83
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the University Without Walls International Council (2nd, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, June 11, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrators; *Community Programs; *Day Care; *Educational Innovation; *Graduate Study; Higher Education; Intervention; Masters Degrees; Microcomputers; Preschool Education; Program Design; *Program Development; Residential Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Distance Education; Nova University FL

ABSTRACT

Representing Nova University's greatest departure from a traditional educational delivery system, the Master's Program for Child Care Administrators is designed to be completed within a 2-year period without interrupting students' professional responsibilities. Two areas of specialization are provided: administration of day care and preschool programs for young children and administration of residential, treatment, and community-based programs for children and adolescents. The 36-semester-hour program is organized into modules involving coursework and a practicum. Information needs of students are met through the University's Information Retrieval Service and the School Practices Information File. Students are also required to attend a program institute providing opportunities for students to meet, share ideas, attend skill-building workshops, establish networks, and engage in face-to-face contact with Nova faculty and administrators. In August of 1981, the program was redesigned along the lines of the campus-based graduate education program for kindergarten through twelfth-grade teachers. Plans for program development, to be implemented in the winter of 1984, include the placement of a microcomputer and peripherals in the home or office of every student and faculty member. It is expected that the effect of this innovation on the program will be revolutionary. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED235884

PROGRAM DELIVERY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION - ONE SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY

Presented to the 2nd Annual Conference of the University Without Walls International Council

Toronto, Ontario
June 11, 1983

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Abbey Manburg

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Abbey Manburg, Ed.D.
Director
Master's Program for
Child Care Administrators
Nova University
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

PS 013872

Nova University, with its Main Campus located in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, has been a leader in the design and delivery of non-traditional programs in higher education since its founding in 1964. The University's mission, in addition to serving the educational needs of the resident, South Florida population in a wide variety of fields, is the affirmation of the importance of meeting the needs of employed professionals as learners, regardlesss of distance and individual work schedules. From this mission flows the acceptance of the problems faced in the development of distance education programs, and, more importantly, the restructuring of these problems into suitable challenges for the higher education community.

Nova University currently offers field-based graduate programs, leading to the Master's, Specialist, and Doctoral degrees in education, business, and public administration. The delivery systems vary from field-based centers in Florida, Nevada and Arizona, where students attend Saturday classes, to the cluster program, built around monthly, weekend meetings with national figures in the respective fields, and week-long summer conferences.

The program which represents the greatest departure from the traditional delivery system is the Master's Program for Child Care Administrators. This program is designed to be completed by students within a two-year period without interrupting their

professional responsibilities. In fact, the maintenance of an administrative position within the field of child care is one of the prerequisites for acceptance and continued matriculation. The Master's Program for Child Care Administrators provides two areas of specialization: administration of day care and preschool programs for young children, and administration of residential, treatment, and community-based programs for children and adolescents. These target groups were chosen precisely because they have been overlooked by traditional universities. In the case of the first area of specialization, administration of day care and preschool settings, there were no graduate programs available at the inception of the Nova program in 1977. At that time, one could pursue an advanced degree in early childhood education, administration and supervision of public school systems, or business management, but there was no program designed specifically for the preschool administrator (Sroufe and Goldman, 1978). The second area of specialization, administration of residential, treatment, and community-based programs for children and adolescents, is unique in North America. Nova University established this specialization, created the curriculum and marketed the program in collaboration with the National Organization of Child Care Worker Associations. This federation of state and provincial associations is deeply committed to earning widespread professional recognition for its membership in the United States and Canada and is promoting advanced training as one critical avenue in this pursuit.

Both program specializations combine curricular attention to areas unique to their respective fields with concepts of

administration/management generic to both fields - administration of organizations and systems, supervision of personnel, financial management, legal issues, resource development, program evaluation, policy development and the political process.

The 36 semester hour program is organized into modules, six and nine credit units in which the curriculum is clearly related to a central theme. An example is the nine credit module, Development of Programs for Young Children, which contains courses in the fields of child development and program development. The goal is to gain a solid background in the field of child development and to use this as a foundation for the development of programs for young children. One clearly articulated program philosophy is that theory, in the absence of practical application, is not terribly useful for the practitioner. Analagous to this is the concern to create more than a training program and to insure that the elements of practical application within the program have a firm foundation in theory. It is critical that students develop an understanding of and appreciation for the function of theory as a generator of good practice and the role of repeated practice in the development of theory.

In addition to the modular coursework, each student is required to complete a six credit practicum. The practicum is a job-related, action-oriented, problem-solving project, designed by the student and accomplished with the assistance of a Faculty Advisor. The practicum is a feature of many Nova University programs and serves as a genuine expression of the Nova philosophy

of combining theory and practice in order to produce change within educational and social service systems.

The student identifies a problem within his/her work setting, searches for solutions appropriate to the constraints of time, finance, and situational authority. The selected solution strategy must be implemented for a minimum period of time, resulting in an evalution of its effectiveness in reducing or eliminating the problem situation. The required subtasks build skills necessary for effective leadership and include: problem identification, analysis and documentation, creation of goals and measureable objectives, analysis of a variety of solution strategies, choosing a strategy and providing a rationale for that choice, utilization of appropriate evaluation techniques, analysis of results, development of an ongoing strategy and, finally, the production of a detailed report which serves to communicate each stage of the process to the wider professional community.

Since many of the students live in isolated rural areas, the University assists in the gathering of information by performing a comprehensive search of the literature by computer. The University's Information Retrieval Service is a highly sophisticated facility with the capacity for searching 200 databases, covering a wide variety of fields. The result of this search is a computer printout of up to 100 citations covering an expanded area within the student's field of inquiry. Once the student chooses those documents which satisfy his needs, the Information Retrieval Service can reproduce microfiche copies from its complete ERIC collection. In addition, difficult-to-locate articles can be searched on-line and retrieved off-line for

interested students (Manburg and Goldman, 1983).

An additional source of material, which can be provided for students as they search for information relevant to their problem situations, is the School Practices Information File (SPIF), which is a database provided by the Bibliographic Retrieval Service (BRS).* Nova University has arranged to contribute abstracts of exemplary practicum reports to SPIF for international dissemination. Educators and others who subscribe to BRS have access to the SPIF database and can order microfiche and paper copies of selected practicum reports directly from the University.

One of the requirements of the program, in addition to the 30 semester hours of coursework and the six semester hour practicum, is the Program Institute. The Institute is a week-long experience, required of all participants, once during their matriculation in the program. Students in the preschool sequence must attend the conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, held annually in November in different locations across the United States. To this two day conference, Nova adds three days of intensive activities, workshops, and presentations by Nova faculty and well-known figures in the field of early childhood education and administration. Those students in the program sequence designed for administrators of residential facilities attend their Institute on the Main Campus of Nova University in the late Spring

*For further information, contact: Bibliographic Retrieval Service, 1200 Route 7, Latham, NY 12110.

of each year. The goal for both experiences is the same: to provide an opportunity for students to meet, share ideas, attend skill building workshops, create friendships and networks over broad geographical boundaries and establish face-to-face contact with Nova faculty and administrators. It is believed that the personal, interactive nature of the Institute experience is a critical element in the design of the program.

Until August, 1981, the program was organized as an independent study process with continuing enrollment. Students received their course materials and progressed through the program at their own pace. The results of this approach, not unlike similar programs, were not encouraging. The completion rate was never higher than 20%. This fact suggests the importance of structuring the program "as nearly as possible to conventional education" (Rumble and Harry, 1982).

In August, 1981, the program was redesigned along the lines of the campus-based graduate education program for K-12 teachers. Courses were organized into modules and time lines were created and communicated to students. This program reorganization, along with the communication of firm expectations for completion of coursework, produced a completion rate of 90%. Although the University is interested in reducing the attrition rate further, the current rate is consistent with the progress of students in on-campus, traditional programs.

Students begin the program at pre-arranged cycles and join a Cohort which progresses through the various program components at the same pace. A typical Cohort is composed of 15-20 students who live and work in locations across North America. With continuous

progress, the Cohort will complete all coursework in 18 months. Although students may begin their practicum at any time beyond the successful completion of the first nine semester hour module, many choose to begin the practicum after completion of coursework. A six month period is reserved for this work and students are expected to complete the entire program within the two year life of the Cohort.

When students begin a module of coursework, they receive a package of specially designed curricular materials which include all texts, journals, reprints and microfiche necessary for completion of requirements. Perhaps the most important element of this package is the study guide, which provides a comprehensive overview of the module, rationale for study, and detailed instruction regarding activities and requirements. The study guide ties the entire learning package together and serves as a roadmap for students as they progress through the coursework.

The student is supported during his coursework by a team of instructors from the Main Campus who are responsible for maintaining biweekly telephone contact. The telephone schedule is determined by the administration of the program and each participant is expected to be available during the pre-arranged appointments. When this is not possible, program faculty may alter individual schedules to assure regular contact, which is considered an important component in the overall delivery system.

During the telephone conversations, the instructor and student discuss program and course requirements, arrange for alternative assignments when requested, discuss course content and

share knowledge. The instructor may explain course concepts when necessary, function as a consultant to the student and, perhaps most critical to the program design, act as a facilitator, relieving the student from a sense of isolation from the University and from other students and offering encouragement and continued engagement in the learning process. Instructor responsibilities include the regular biweekly telephone contact, accurate record keeping, grading student papers and activities, providing detailed feedback to students by mail and telephone, and assigning a final grade.

Perhaps the most exciting program development is the planned linkage of students and faculty through the electronic mail capacity of the microcomputer. The University has developed a plan, ready for implementation in the Winter, 1984, which will place a microcomputer, screen, disk drive, and modem in the home or office of every student and faculty member. The effect on the program will be revolutionary.

Utilization of this technology will allow almost instant access to students and faculty. Turnaround time for faculty response to student work will be reduced and students and faculty will be able to send or receive their messages at any time of the day or night. The central administrative staff will be able to send letters and memoranda to individual students, single Cohorts, or to the entire student body, with the ease of typing one copy.

An important benefit to program participants, beyond increased administrative efficiency, is the ability to interact with each other without the constraints of geography or time. Students will emerge from their current state of isolation

relative to one another and become part of a network of individuals with similar personal, professional, and educational concerns. As the program grows and the number of graduates increases, the network becomes a powerful tool for participants since its membership will represent the leadership in the respective fields across North America.

The use of computer technology for electronic mail is only one of many possibilities. Once the equipment is in place, students will have access to software appropriate to the administrative needs of their centers and agencies. Another possibility is the development of computer assisted instruction in those curriculum areas most consistent with this type of delivery system. Budget development and financial management would be a prime target for this effort. Regardless of the ultimate direction, it appears that the employment of computer technology, wisely adapted to distance education programs, creates a wealth of opportunities for the institution and for the student as well.

Nova University, in its nineteenth year of delivering non-traditional distance education, is committed to the development of quality programs for the adult learner. The Master's Program for Child Care Administrators is one example of the University's efforts to design programs for unserved audiences, regardless of geography, work schedules and other factors which so often inhibit the traditional institution. The relatively short history of Nova University serves to demonstrate that meeting the educational needs of adult learners at a distance is consistent with the educator's traditional responsibility for the delivery of programs of quality and integrity.

REFERENCES

Manburg, A. & Goldman, R. Computer technology for information retrieval: tool for the educator as change agent. Educational Technology , June, 1983.

Rumble, G. & Harry, K. . The distance teaching universities. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982, p. 21.

Sroufe, G. E. & Goldman, R. M. The university and child care administrators: a new partnership. Child Welfare, 1978, 9, 608.